

Faculty Assembly Executive Council (FAEC) Meeting Minutes

November 30, 2011, 9:15 to 11:15 am

Present: Jim Morley, Elaine Risch, Donna Crawley, Max Goldberg, Peggy Greene, Jillian Weiss, Sam Mustafa, Alex Olbrecht, Ruma Sen

Secretary: Rebecca Root

1. Discussion of Tenure Cap

Discussed President Mercer's email of November 29, 2011 (attached) and Board of Trustees Policy 459 (attached).

Discussed whether the revision to Policy 459 in December 2010 was in fact a change of policy that created a tenure cap where previously only caps on Associate and Full Professor ranks existed. We assume this policy is what President Mercer was referring to in his email, but a cursory search of the state statute or regulation that defines 75% as the cap for tenure has not turned up any results. We clearly need more information from President Mercer on where the state defines these limits. Or is it simply a Board of Trustees' policy but not a state one?

Rep. Mustafa noted that an examination of the State of New Jersey Higher Education website indicates that there have been major changes to state leadership on higher education policy over the last year. There is currently an Acting Secretary of Higher Education, but many of the positions under her remain vacant. We should examine that website to see if we can find any policy on tenure caps. Anecdotal evidence suggests other NJ colleges have discussed but not implemented tenure caps.

Discussed the content of Policy 459, including some apparent logical contradictions. For example, the policy caps the percentage of "tenurable" lines, not tenured lines. It states that "'Faculty' shall be defined as the total number of budgeted tenure eligible positions", but then attempts to limit tenure eligible ("tenurable") lines to 75%. It does not include adjuncts in calculating faculty. Is this policy also the origin of the policy the Provost has stated that 25% of our classes ought to be taught by adjuncts? Also discussed impact of tenure caps on the promotion process in terms of making it more competitive.

Action: Pres. Morley will meet with Pres. Mercer this week to ask about the relevant definition.

2. Program review

At today's FA, Pres. Morley will read the resolution developed by the FAEC regarding non-tenure for programmatic needs:

"Resolution: In an action that is unprecedented for decades, the Ramapo administration recently denied the tenure of a candidate who had been approved by the peer review process, not for reasons of academic quality or standards, but for 'programmatic needs.'

No clear definition of these ‘needs’ was provided in advance, nor any evidence of a situation that would require such extraordinary action. The lack of a clearly stated policy, equitably applied to all tenure candidates, violates the requirement of the contract that criteria for reappointment decisions be applied uniformly to all candidates. We strongly object to this unwarranted intervention in our tenure process.”

However, we will not bring this to a vote at this time, but rather make programmatic review a discussion item at today’s FA.

3. Policy on Minimum Requirements for the Baccalaureate Degree

Some feel this policy change is not worrisome because programs are still free to require 128 hours, but others feel it is because there will be pressure for all programs to align with the 120 credit requirement. Others raise concerns that this policy has not been approved by ARC. The 120 hour requirement is intended to apply to the adult degree completion program, but this program has not yet been approved by ARC either.

Rep Crawley raised the need for a study projecting impact on enrollment, graduation, rates, finance, etc.

Action: After some discussion, consensus was reached to put the following resolution to a vote at FA today:

Resolution: The Faculty Assembly requests that the Provost’s Council table the vote on the Policy on Minimum Requirements for the Baccalaureate Degree. Until the Office of the Provost provides ARC with a study on the projected impacts of this policy change and ARC reviews the policy and makes a recommendation to the Faculty Assembly.

4. Meeting with the President’s Cabinet

Tentatively scheduled for next Wed at 2pm, or else Dec. 14. FAEC will develop an agenda to bring to the meeting.

5. Elections

Units are proceeding with selecting unit reps to the Strategic Planning Committee. After today’s FA, ballots will be sent out for the FA presidential election. In February, elections for FAEC unit reps (by the units), FAEC all college rep (by FA), and all-college rep to the Strategic Planning Committee (by FA) will be held.

Meeting adjourned 11:15am.

Note that we failed to approve the minutes of November 16. We will do so at the beginning of the next meeting.

Date: Tuesday, November 29, 2011

From: President Mercer

Title: Message from the President: Sabbatical Leave, Program Review, Tenure and Promotion

Dear Colleagues:

I hope that each of you had a happy Thanksgiving holiday. Certainly we have much to be thankful for and I am grateful to all faculty, staff and students who contribute to the vitality of our College.

I am concerned, however, that some essential elements of Ramapo's collegiate life are being abraded. In particular, there is some evidence, thankfully still exceptional, of a decline in civility and respect in public discourse. This has, at times, been accompanied by rampant speculation asserted as fact. These tendencies run counter to the principles on which Ramapo was founded. They are also a serious and unproductive distraction. To help us move forward in a productive way, let me provide you with the facts associated with three current and contentious issues.

(1) Sabbatical leaves

In the last few years, the full complement of sabbatical leaves allotted by the state has been granted. At present, however, we are not able to move on the issue of sabbatical leaves because they are currently the subject of statewide collective bargaining between the AFT and the Governor's office (the Governor is legally the employer of record for purposes of collective bargaining). As President, I can urge for a timely schedule of negotiations but am legally prohibited from commenting publicly on matters that are the subject of collective bargaining. We simply have no choice but to wait for the negotiations to be concluded at which point we will promptly begin the sabbatical application process dictated by the agreement.

(2) Programs with low enrolments

It is the Provost's and my responsibility, on behalf of the Board of Trustees, to ensure that courses sought by our students can be offered and that teaching loads and class sizes are reasonably balanced across the curriculum. This responsibility is particularly acute in programs where enrolments have trended downward. It is an issue currently being faced by a host of colleges and universities nationwide.

This is obviously a delicate subject but one which we need to be able to raise without it giving rise to apocalyptic speculations. In identifying the issue and seeking faculty consultation in developing criteria, the Provost has not said that

any particular programs will be closed or merged. However, this is a possibility that must be discussed.

(3) Tenure and Promotion

We are subject to state-defined limits on the percentage of faculty who may be tenured (75%) and who may hold the ranks of Associate and Full Professor (75%). From 2004 until this year we had hired a net five additional faculty each year. Budgetary constraints prevented us from doing so this year. At the same time we have seen very few retirements as faculty elect to work longer. Already the effect of these developments has been to curtail the number of Associate and Full Professorships available to be applied for this year. And by 2013, we expect to run up against the tenure cap so that some who are otherwise eligible for tenure will not receive it. Again, the subject is distasteful but we cannot ignore it or wish it away and we will have some hard choices to make.

I look forward to a temperate and thoughtful discussion of these and other matters in the weeks and months to come.

Peter P. Mercer
President

BOARD OF TRUSTEES POLICY

Section: 400

Section Title: Administration and Finance

Policy Name: Professorial Rank and Tenure Ratios

Policy Number: 459

College Policy Executive: Chief Planning Officer

Approval Authority: Board of Trustees

Responsible Executive: Office of the President

Responsible Unit: Office of the Provost/VPAA

Date Adopted: October 25, 1995

Date Revised: May, 2005, August 18, 2010, December 13, 2010

1. Policy

There shall be a limit to the number of faculty holding Associate, Full and Distinguished Professor rank as stated below.

- a) Full professors and associates professors will not exceed 75% of faculty.
- b) The percentage of full professors and distinguished professors will not exceed 37.5% of faculty .
- c) The minimum total tenurable lines is 70%
- d) The maximum ratio of total tenurable lines shall be 75% with due regard being given to the College's Affirmative Action goals in current and future years.
- e) "Faculty" shall be defined as the total number of budgeted tenure eligible positions and includes budgeted faculty lines, budgeted librarians I, II III, the president, the provost/vice president for academic affairs, the vice provost and academic deans.
- f) Tenure conferred on the president and provost/vice president for academic affairs, vice provost and deans shall not be counted in the tenure quota at any time.
- g) Faculty receiving tenure by exceptional action shall not be counted in the tenure quota until the year in which they would have received tenure under the normal tenure process .

2. Reason for Policy

To set forth policy to ensure promotional opportunities over time, and to maintain an intellectually and competitively healthy academic environment. To also set forth policy to provide an effective balance of faculty resources and institutional flexibility, and to ensure stability and continuity of faculty leadership and program development.

3. To Whom Does The Policy Apply

Faculty and academic administrators who are appointed with concurrent academic rank

4. Related Documents

Faculty Handbook

5. Contacts

Office of the Provost/VPAA

201-684-7529